

Rep. Pete Stark lauded U.S. District Court Judge Paul Friedman's injunction to block implementation of the President's plan to offer prescription drug discount cards to Medicare beneficiaries.

Rep. Stark had joined the lawsuit by filing an amicus brief with the court August 7th because of concerns that the plan was devised to delay Congressional action on a Medicare prescription drug benefit rather than meet the needs of seniors. Specifically, he raised concerns similar to those of the plaintiffs that the plan had been devised outside of the public eye in conjunction with the pharmaceutical industry, and that the Administration had failed to follow federal law in developing the program.

"The Court has affirmed what we've been saying for months – that the Bush Administration acted without authority in its attempt to implement a Medicare prescription drug discount card program. The fact that the judge ruled immediately to block the program highlights that the Bush Administration simply doesn't understand the rules of government. They make up rules for governing just like they cook budget numbers to meet their needs," said Rep. Stark.

"This decision is a real victory for consumers. Now, if the program is to go forward, the Administration will be forced to work with Congress and with beneficiary representatives. Then the Administration will finally hear the message they should have understood before they started this sham process: America's seniors don't want a Medicare-endorsed discount card. Such cards are readily available today and fail to meet their prescription drug needs. What America's seniors want –and need – is a Medicare prescription drug benefit that provides coverage for their prescription drug costs," Rep. Stark said.

In a related matter, Reps. Stark, Waxman, Dingell, Rangel, Brown, and Ross yesterday requested an investigation by the General Accounting Office into the existing drug discount card programs to discover what level of discounts those cards typically provide, whether they provide the level of discounts advertised, and to analyze state action to regulate these companies because of consumer protection concerns.